

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

September 1, 1962

MEMO FOR MR. CHARLES JOHNSON

Per our conversation. This was checked out with Secretary Gilpatric, Mr. Salinger, the JCS and Mr. Greenfield at State.

Lt. Fitzgerald is supposed to be giving it under Admiral Dennison's auspices at CINCLANT, Norfolk, about 11:00 A. M.

Nils A. Lennartson
Deputy Assistant Secretary

Ferguson

1 Statement

2 Deliberating report

August 30, 1932

Mr. Robert L. Fitzgerald
Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

The White House announced Friday that two small naval vessels, believed to be Cuban, fired on an unarmed Navy Aircraft at 2 PM on August 30. This report was based on reports made to Atlantic Fleet authorities by myself and my fellow crew members, Lt. West and Chief Pickett. I am Lt. Fitzgerald and was pilot of the plane involved in the incident and speak for the crew. All of us are members of the Naval Reserve and are just completing our annual training period with Atlantic Fleet Forces.

Inasmuch as the matter is now being taken up with Cuban authorities by our Government, I believe it would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

[Typed by the Kennedy Library
from a faded original, 2/22/77]

U.S. Naval Base
Key West, Florida

Incomplete - completed copy
available soon 12/6/77

Code 210
Serial: 0057
20 August 1962

~~SECRET~~

From: Commander Key West Force
To: Chief of Naval Operations

Subj: Statements concerning S2F Incident; forwarding of (U)

Ref: { (a) COMFWESTFOR MSG. 302100Z AUG 1962 (S)
(b) COMFWESTFOR MSG. 310145Z AUG 1962 (S)
(c) COMFWESTFOR MSG. 310330Z AUG 1962 (S) } ?

Encl: (1) Statement of LT David F. Fitzgerald, USNR, dated
30 AUG 62
(2) Statement of LT Richard C. West, USNR, dated 30
AUG 62
(3) Statement of PICKETT, Marshall A., AOC, USNR,
dated 30 AUG 62

1. In amplification of references (a), (b) and (c), three copies
each of enclosures (1), (2) and (3) are forwarded herewith.

F.C. WINE, Jr. (or Wine?)
Chief of Staff

Copy to:

CINCLANTFLT (w/encs - 3 copies each)

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11652, SEC. 3(E), 5(D), 5(E) AND 11

OSD NLK-73-30
BY SKF NARS, DATE 12/6/77



~~SECRET~~

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD C. WEST, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE,
609360/1315 ATTACHED TO AIR ANTISUBMARINE SQUADRON SIX SIX ONE
(VS-661)

On the afternoon of 30 August 1962, I was scheduled to fly as co-pilot with Lieutenant David F. FITZGERALD, U.S. NAVAL RESERVE. Marshall PICKETT, AOC, USNR, was the radar operator. The plane was an S2F, BUNO 136717. Our plane took off at 1306R. We were to make a routine patrol. At 1413RR II heard the radar operator report a target over the intercom and he gave the bearing and distance. The pilot Lieutenant FITZGERALD banked the plane and came to a reciprocal course from that which we had been flying. At this time I finished transmitting my 1358R position and then commenced setting up my cameras and working the DR position on my plotting board. During the time from our turn to a reciprocal course until we had the target in sight, I could hear the radar operator calling off bearings and distance to the target and to the shore. As soon as we had the target in sight I commenced to take pictures by pulling the camera trigger which automatically sets the photographic mechanism in operation. As we approached the target, which turned out to be two ships, I took pictures at short intervals. As we got close-in I observed two men on the after-deck of the ship nearest to us and two men on the forward deck of the more distant ship. I observed muzzle fire, that is flame coming from the muzzle of the gun, on the after-deck of the closest ship. The two men on the after-deck of the closer ship were manning a deck gun, one man on each side of the gun. The two men on the forward deck of the more distant ship also were manning a similar gun. About the same time that I saw the muzzle fire from the gun on the nearest ship, the pilot banked the plane to port and descended to a lower altitude. At the same time he put on full power. All three of us, the pilot, radar operator and myself agreed over the intercom that we were being fired upon, and at 1420R reported the incident on the radio to an aircraft which was relaying our message traffic. After we were well clear of the ships, the pilot put the plane back on our original track. At 1426R I reported to the relaying aircraft that we had resumed our track and that we had no apparent damage to our aircraft.

The two boats which I observed appeared to be of the same size. I would say that they belonged to the same class. They

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E. O. 11652, SEC. 3(E), 5(D), 5(E) AND 11

OSD NCK-73-30

BY GKF

NARS, DATE 12/6/77

SECRET

appeared to be of a dark grey or possibly green color which is difficult to describe because of the reflection of the sea. The gun was protected by a gun shield and the muzzle fire which I observed consisted of short bursts of winking flashes.

My navigation showed that when we passed the ships at 1417R our position was Latitude 23°29' North Longitude 81°00' st.

Richard C. WEST, LT, USNR

U.S. Naval Base
Key West, Florida

I, James A. Potter, III, the undersigned officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing instrument was subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of August 1962, by Lieutenant Richard C. WEST, U.S. Naval Reserve, 609360/1315, who is known to me to be a U. S. Armed Forces member on active duty. And I do further certify that I am at the date of this certificate a commissioned officer of grade, branch of service, and organization stated below in the active service of the United States Armed Forces, that by status no seal is required on this certificate, and same is executed in my capacity as a law specialist under authority granted to me by Article 136, UCMJ; 10USC936.

James A. POTTER, III
128596 Captain, U.S. Navy
Staff, Commander, U.S. Naval
Base, Key West, Florida

STATEMENT OF MARSHALL A. PICKETT, ACC, 603 90 63, USNR ATTACHED TO AIR ANTI-SUBMARINE SQUADRON 661 (VS-661).

On the afternoon of 30 August 1962, I was assigned to an S2F aircraft from my squadron to make an afternoon flight. My duties were that of radar operator. We took off from Boca Chica Airfield at the U.S. Naval Air Station, Key West, Florida, about 1300R. My duties included reporting all unidentified targets with their range and bearing and also range and bearing of the nearest land. About one hour after take off, I reported an unidentified target at ten miles and gave the pilot the relative bearing of the target. The pilot commenced to change course and I proceeded to vector the pilot on relative vectors to a new heading towards the unidentified target. The target appeared on my radar scope as a single target. Shortly, the pilot informed me that the target appeared as two small ships. At this time, I reported the nearest land at a range of 12 miles and the targets at 7 miles. The pilot instructed the co-pilot to get ready to take pictures. Shortly after this I leaned to the left from my seat and could look forward out the windshield in front of the pilots. I could see our targets which were two dark grey patrol-type boats. The left hand boat began to change course much faster than the right hand boat and the pilot immediately banked and changed course to remain parallel to the course of the left hand boat. However, I looked to my right out of the prothole beside my seat on the right side of the plane and saw the patrol type boat at about thirty degrees forward of our beam. I saw two men standing on the bow manning a gun. The gun had a harness and two shoulder pieces. One man was in the harness. He was training the gun directly towards our plane. The other man was standing close by as we passed parallel to the boat. I could not see any magazine on the gun as the gun shield at each side of the barrel hid the breech area from view. I was a Chief Gunners Mate during World War II and the gun which I saw was almost identical with the 20mm guns which we had on our ships during the war. At this time the pilot was banking the plane to the left and I heard the co-pilot say they were firing from the boat. He also said he saw gunfire and smoke. The pilot also said he heard gunfire. Our speed was increased and the noise from the engine became so loud that I could not even hear the radio. During the run from the point where I reported the target at 7 miles and nearest land at 12 miles I was constantly checking my radar screen and at no time was land closer than 12 miles. When we passed the boats my radar screen showed nearest land at 12 miles.

I am a radar operator and air crewman with a background of four years of flying. In the last two years I have taken two refresher courses at the Navy Radar Operator's Training School at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, and I have diplomas issued at the end of each course. I have met all the qualifications for radar operator on the S2F aircraft. I have more posted actual air crew time than any other aircrewman in our squadron.

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DOD DIR 5200.10

MARSHALL A. PICKETT, ACC, USNR
U. S. Naval Base
Key West, Florida

I; James A. Potter, III, the undersigned officer, do hereby certify that the foregoing instrument was subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of August 1962, by Marshall A. Pickett, AOC, 603 90 63, USNR, who is known to me to be a U. S. Armed Forces member on active duty. And I do further certify that I am at the date of this certificate a commissioned officer of the grade, branch of service, and organization stated below in the active service of the United States Armed Forces, that by statute no seal is required on this certificate, and same is executed in my capacity as a law specialist under authority granted to me by Article 136, UCMJ; 10 USC 936.

JAMES A. POTTER; III
128596 Captain, U. S. Navy
Staff, Commander, U. S. Naval Base,
Key West, Florida